

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 659

By Jenkins

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend James M. "Buddy"
Taylor of Grand Junction for his courageous
military service during World War II.

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Tennessee have, throughout the years, been called upon to take up arms against the enemies of this great nation, risking their lives and leaving their loved ones behind to honorably safeguard the freedoms and liberties guaranteed to all citizens of these United States and vanquishing those who threaten our way of life; and

WHEREAS, while the heroic deeds of Tennesseans have been extolled throughout the history of our State and nation, the distinguished military service of every proud Tennessean should be illuminated, shared, and properly honored, especially those honorable military veterans who served during World War II; and

WHEREAS, James M. "Buddy" Taylor of Grand Junction, a 95-year-old veteran, is one such individual who bravely endured one of the greatest hardships that a military pilot could bear; and

WHEREAS, a member of the legendary Flying Tigers of the American Volunteer Group, he was shot down and captured by Japanese forces while flying a mission in China and imprisoned there before being transported to Korea and finally Japan, where he remained until he was freed and rejoined the U.S. Army Air Force on September 12, 1945; and

WHEREAS, today, Buddy Taylor is one of the last four American Volunteer Group pilots still living, and the only one in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the son of Lavergne Stroup Taylor and J. Murray Taylor of Grand Junction, James "Buddy" Taylor is a 1940 graduate of Grand Junction High School and was attending Martin Junior College, now the University of Tennessee at Martin, at the outbreak of World War II; and

WHEREAS, just nineteen years of age, Buddy Taylor wanted to enlist, but his parents refused to sign the required paperwork for someone under twenty-one to join the military. At his defense job, he learned about the U.S. Army Aviation Cadet program and convinced his parents to let him apply after his twentieth birthday. He was accepted into the program on September 16, 1942; and

WHEREAS, in the summer of 1944, Buddy Taylor was sent to China as a replacement pilot in the Fourteenth Air Force "Flying Tigers," under the command of General Claire Lee Chennault. He was assigned to the 75th "Flying Tiger Sharks" Squadron of the 23rd Fighter Group, commanded by the famous pilot "Tex" Hill, who had been a squadron leader in the original American Volunteer Group (AVG) and was later group commander; and

WHEREAS, led by General Chennault, the American Volunteer Group was a collection of volunteer air units comprised of former American military pilots who had been recruited to aid the Nationalist government of China against Japan just prior to World War II; and

WHEREAS, going into combat shortly after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, the AVG became famous for their defense of China and Burma, with the Chinese calling the brave pilots the Flying Tigers. With the U.S. now at war, the 23rd Fighter Group would officially join with the original Flying Tigers and continue their distinguished legacy; and

WHEREAS, as part of the 23rd Fighter Group, Buddy Taylor first flew the Curtiss P-40 Warhawk and then the P-51 Mustang. On November 11, 1944, while flying a P-51B, he was shot down after strafing a Japanese-held airfield in Hengyang, China. Ground fire hit his coolant system and his engine quit, forcing him to glide away from the field and bail out at a hazardous 300 feet; and

WHEREAS, landing beside his burning plane, he threw his chute into the fire and turned to run, but was immediately captured by a squad of Japanese soldiers. The raid had been successful, with the Japanese losing twenty-five planes, while the U.S. lost four planes, with one pilot killed, two making it back to safety, and Mr. Taylor captured as a prisoner of war; and

WHEREAS, tortured and abused at the hands of his captors, Mr. Taylor valiantly withstood their cruel treatment over the coming months, as he and his fellow captured pilots were imprisoned in China, then Korea, and later Japan, chained and roughly transported like cattle to their next destination; and

WHEREAS, arriving on Hokkaido Island on July 6, 1945, on the grounds of the Japanese Imperial Army Northern Headquarters, Buddy Taylor and his fellow prisoners of war received a wonderful message from an air drop four days after the Japanese capitulated when a wrench with a note attached from Major Vance E. Black of the 500th Bomb Group told them supplies were on the way. A month after the surrender, the pilots were reunited with the U.S. Army Air Force; and

WHEREAS, upon his return to Tennessee after the war, Mr. Taylor reunited with his college sweetheart, Lee Ella Robertson, and the couple were married in 1946. He would go on to enjoy a thirty-five year career as a mail carrier, and she worked for twenty-five years for South Central Bell and BellSouth; and

WHEREAS, the Taylors' joyous union produced three sons, Jim, Marc, and Steve, and four grandchildren, Brooks, David, Erica, and Zac; and

WHEREAS, after the mournful passing of his first wife, Buddy Taylor was joined in holy matrimony with Sharon Woelm Taylor, who has been a wonderful companion and blessing to him; and

WHEREAS, while no offering can properly relay our gratitude for his bravery in aerial combat and as a prisoner of war, it is most appropriate that we should honor James M. Taylor to the full extent of our ability, as he has made untold and innumerable sacrifices to preserve the liberties we enjoy today; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE

CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend a hero of the highest order, James M.

"Buddy" Taylor, for his distinguished and courageous military service to our Nation during World War II and offer our humble thanks for a difficult job well done.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.